



## Alcohol Use in the United States:

» **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 85.6 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime; 69.5 percent reported that they drank in the past year; 54.9 percent reported that they drank in the past month.<sup>1</sup>



» **Prevalence of Binge Drinking and Heavy Alcohol Use:** In 2019, 25.8 percent of people ages 18 or older reported that they engaged in binge drinking in the past month; 6.3 percent reported that they engaged in heavy alcohol use in the past month.<sup>1</sup> (See sidebar on page 2 for definitions of binge drinking and heavy alcohol use.)

## Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) in the United States:

- » **Adults (ages 18+):** According to the 2019 NSDUH, 14.1 million adults ages 18 and older<sup>2</sup> (5.6 percent of this age group<sup>3</sup>) had AUD. This includes 8.9 million men<sup>2</sup> (7.3 percent of men in this age group<sup>3</sup>) and 5.2 million women<sup>2</sup> (4.0 percent of women in this age group<sup>3</sup>).
- According to the 2018 NSDUH, the most recent year for which data are available, about 7.9 percent of adults who had AUD in the past year received treatment. This includes 8.0 percent of males and 7.7 percent of females with AUD in this age group.<sup>4</sup>
- » **Youth ages 12 to 17:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, an estimated 414,000 adolescents ages 12–17<sup>2</sup> (1.7 percent of this age group<sup>3</sup>) had AUD. This number includes 163,000 males<sup>2</sup> (1.3 percent of males in this age group<sup>3</sup>) and 251,000 females<sup>2</sup> (2.1 percent of females in this age group<sup>3</sup>).
- According to the 2018 NSDUH, the most recent year for which data are available, about 5.0 percent of youth who had AUD in the past year received treatment. This includes 5.6 percent of males and 4.6 percent of females with AUD in this age group.<sup>4</sup>

## Alcohol-Related Deaths:

- » An estimated 95,000<sup>5</sup> people (approximately 68,000 men and 27,000 women<sup>5</sup>) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States. The first is tobacco, and the second is poor diet and physical inactivity.<sup>6</sup>
- » In 2014, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 9,967 deaths (31 percent of overall driving fatalities).<sup>7</sup>

## Economic Burden:

- » In 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States \$249.0 billion.<sup>8</sup>
- » Three-quarters of the total cost of alcohol misuse is related to binge drinking.<sup>8</sup>

## Global Burden:

- » In 2012, 3.3 million deaths, or 5.9 percent of all global deaths (7.6 percent for men and 4.1 percent for women), were attributable to alcohol consumption.<sup>9</sup>
- » In 2014, the World Health Organization reported that alcohol contributed to more than 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions, most notably DSM–IV alcohol dependence (see sidebar), liver cirrhosis, cancers, and injuries.<sup>10</sup> In 2012, 5.1 percent of the burden of disease and injury worldwide (139 million disability-adjusted life-years) was attributable to alcohol consumption.<sup>9</sup>
- » Globally, alcohol misuse was the fifth leading risk factor for premature death and disability in 2010. Among people between the ages of 15 and 49, it is the first.<sup>11</sup> In the age group 20–39 years, approximately 25 percent of the total deaths are alcohol attributable.<sup>12</sup>

## Family Consequences:

- » More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems, according to a 2012 study.<sup>13</sup>

## Underage Drinking:

- » **Prevalence of Underage Alcohol Use:**
  - **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, 39.7 percent of people ages 12–20 report that they have had at least 1 drink in their lives.<sup>14</sup> According to the 2019 NSDUH, about 7.0 million people ages 12–20<sup>15</sup> (18.5 percent of this age group<sup>14</sup>) reported drinking alcohol in the past month (17.2 percent of males and 19.9 percent of females<sup>14</sup>).

## Definitions

**Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD):** AUD is a chronic relapsing brain disease characterized by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences. AUD can range from mild to severe, and recovery is possible regardless of severity. The fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM–IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association, described two distinct disorders—alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence—with specific criteria for each. The fifth edition, DSM–5, integrates the two DSM–IV disorders, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence, into a single disorder called alcohol use disorder, or AUD, with mild, moderate, and severe subclassifications.

### Binge Drinking:

- » NIAAA defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to 0.08 g/dL. This typically occurs after 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men—in about 2 hours.<sup>30</sup>
- » The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which conducts the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), defines binge drinking as 5 or more alcoholic drinks for males or 4 or more alcoholic drinks for females on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) on at least 1 day in the past month.<sup>31</sup>

**Heavy Alcohol Use:** SAMHSA defines heavy alcohol use as binge drinking on 5 or more days in the past month.

### Patterns of Drinking Associated with AUD:

Binge drinking and heavy alcohol use can increase an individual's risk of AUD. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that if alcohol is consumed, it should be in moderation, defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age. Some individuals should avoid alcohol completely.

**Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatality:** A fatality in a crash involving a driver or motorcycle rider (operator) with a BAC of 0.08 g/dL or greater.

**Disability-Adjusted Life-Years (DALYs):** A measure of years of life lost or lived in less than full health.

**Underage Drinking:** Alcohol use by anyone under the age of 21. In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21.

- **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, approximately 4.2 million people<sup>15</sup> (about 11.1 percent<sup>14</sup>) ages 12–20 (10.4 percent of males and 11.8 percent of females<sup>14</sup>) reported binge drinking in the past month.
- **Prevalence of Heavy Alcohol Use:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, approximately 825,000 people<sup>15</sup> (about 2.2 percent<sup>14</sup>) ages 12–20 (2.1 percent of males and 2.3 percent of females<sup>14</sup>) reported heavy alcohol use in the past month.

» **Consequences of Underage Alcohol Use:**

- Research indicates that alcohol use during the teenage years could interfere with normal adolescent brain development and increase the risk of developing AUD. In addition, underage drinking contributes to a range of acute consequences, including injuries, sexual assaults, and even deaths—including those from car crashes.<sup>16,17</sup>

## Alcohol and College Students:

» **Prevalence of Alcohol Use:**

- **Prevalence of Drinking:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, 52.5 percent of full-time college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month compared with 44.0 percent of other persons of the same age.<sup>18</sup>
- **Prevalence of Binge Drinking:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, 33.0 percent of college students ages 18–22 reported binge drinking in the past month compared with 27.7 percent of other persons of the same age.<sup>18</sup>
- **Prevalence of Heavy Alcohol Use:** According to the 2019 NSDUH, 8.2 percent of college students ages 18–22 reported heavy alcohol use in the past month compared with 6.4 percent of other persons of the same age.<sup>18</sup>

» **Consequences—Researchers estimate that each year:**

- 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes.<sup>19</sup>
- 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.<sup>20</sup>
- 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report experiencing alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.<sup>20</sup>
- Roughly 9 percent of college students meet the criteria for AUD.<sup>21</sup>
- About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.<sup>22</sup>

## Alcohol and Pregnancy:

- » The prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in the United States was estimated by the Institute of Medicine in 1996 to be between 0.5 and 3.0 cases per 1,000.<sup>23</sup>
- » More recent reports from specific U.S. sites report the prevalence of FAS to be 2 to 7 cases per 1,000, and the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) to be as high as 20 to 50 cases per 1,000.<sup>24,25</sup>

## Alcohol and the Human Body:

- » In 2018, of the 83,517 liver disease deaths among individuals ages 12 and older, 42.8 percent involved alcohol. Among males, 52,499 liver disease deaths occurred and 45.4 percent involved alcohol. Among females, 31,018 liver disease deaths occurred and 38.5 percent involved alcohol.<sup>26</sup>
- » Among all cirrhosis deaths in 2013, 47.9 percent were alcohol related. The proportion of alcohol-related cirrhosis was highest (76.5 percent) among deaths of persons ages 25–34, followed by deaths of persons ages 35–44, at 70.0 percent.<sup>27</sup>
- » In 2009, alcohol-related liver disease was the primary cause of almost 1 in 3 liver transplants in the United States.<sup>28</sup>
- » Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, liver, and breast.<sup>29</sup>

**For more information, please visit:** <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 2.1B—Tobacco Product and Alcohol Use in Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group: Percentages, 2018 and 2019. Available at: [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec\\_t2pe2019.htm#tab2-1b](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec_t2pe2019.htm#tab2-1b) Accessed 9/15/20.

<sup>2</sup> SAMHSA. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 5.4A—Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group and Demographic Characteristics: Numbers in Thousands, 2018 and 2019. Available at: [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec\\_t5pe2019.htm#tab5-4a](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec_t5pe2019.htm#tab5-4a). Accessed 9/15/20.

<sup>3</sup> SAMHSA. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 5.4B—Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group and Demographic Characteristics: Percentages, 2018 and 2019. Available at: [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec\\_t5pe2019.htm#tab5-4b](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec_t5pe2019.htm#tab5-4b). Accessed 9/15/20.

<sup>4</sup> SAMHSA. Population prevalence estimates (%) are weighted by the person-level analysis weight and derived from the 2018 NSDUH public-use data file, defining “any treatment” as treatment or counseling designed to help reduce or stop alcohol use, including detoxification and any other treatment for medical problems associated with alcohol use, as well as defining AUD as alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence according to the 4th edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2018 (NSDUH-2019) Public-Use File Dataset. Available at: <https://www.datafiles.samhsa.gov/study/national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-2018-nid18757>. Accessed 11/15/19.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Alcohol and Public Health: Alcohol-Related Disease Impact (ARDI). Annual Average for United States 2011–2015 Alcohol-Attributable Deaths Due to Excessive Alcohol Use, All Ages. Available at: [https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH\\_ARDI/Default/Report.aspx?T=AAM&P=1A04A664-0244-42C1-91DE-316F3AF6B447&R=B885BD06-13DF-45CD-8DD8-AA6B178C4ECE&M=32B5FFE7-81D2-43C5-A892-9B9B3C4246C7&F=AAMCauseGenderNew&D=H](https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH_ARDI/Default/Report.aspx?T=AAM&P=1A04A664-0244-42C1-91DE-316F3AF6B447&R=B885BD06-13DF-45CD-8DD8-AA6B178C4ECE&M=32B5FFE7-81D2-43C5-A892-9B9B3C4246C7&F=AAMCauseGenderNew&D=H). Accessed 9/24/20. Methodology: According to the CDC, due to [scientific updates to ARDI](#), estimates of alcohol-attributable deaths or years of potential life lost generated in the current version of ARDI should not be compared with estimates that were generated using the ARDI default reports or analyses in the ARDI Custom Data Portal prior to July 30, 2020.

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- <sup>13</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *Data Spotlight: More than 7 Million Children Live with a Parent with Alcohol Problems*, 2012. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/Spot061ChildrenOfAlcoholics2012/Spot061ChildrenOfAlcoholics2012.pdf>. Accessed 12/2/19.
- <sup>14</sup> SAMHSA. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table 7.16B—Alcohol Use in Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month among Persons Aged 12 to 20, by Gender: Percentages, 2002-2019. Available at <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec7pe2019.htm#tab7-16b>. Accessed 9/15/20.
- <sup>15</sup> SAMHSA. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table 7.16A—Alcohol Use in Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month among Persons Aged 12 to 20, by Gender: Numbers in Thousands, 2002-2019. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29394/NSDUHDetailedTabs2019/NSDUHDetTabsSec7pe2019.htm#tab7-16a>. Accessed 9/15/20.
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